

Whittington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124140
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340498
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Carter
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Wilmot
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 13 lessons and saw 11 teachers. They also met with parents, groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including teachers' planning, the school improvement plan, assessment, monitoring and evaluation records, records for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and safeguarding procedures. The responses from the pupil and staff questionnaires were analysed, as were the responses from the 143 parents' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- progress of all groups of pupils, to determine whether it is improving as the school suggested, particularly in mathematics, but also in science.
- how well the curriculum promotes basic skills, especially numeracy, in different subjects, while ensuring progress in all subjects.
- what steps leaders and managers are taking to ensure improvement is sustainable.
- the use of computers to help pupils learn more.

Information about the school

The school has a below average proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Fewer pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds than is found in most schools. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school at different times is above average. The school holds an Intermediate International Schools award and an Active Schools award. It also has Healthy School status and a Bronze Eco award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In her relentless drive for improvement, the headteacher has built a strong leadership team. Together, they have successfully embedded in all staff the ambition and drive to accelerate pupils' progress. Good improvement planning and the actions arising from it are the result of accurate self-evaluation, which is informed by effective assessment procedures and the rigorous tracking of pupils' progress. All initiatives are carefully selected and prioritised to meet the challenging targets the school sets itself. This is a school that knows itself well, works purposefully towards its aims, and has a very strong determination to become outstanding. Its good capacity for further improvement is accelerating along with pupils' progress. This is clearly demonstrated in the recent improvements in English and mathematics, in the well planned curriculum, and in the good quality of teaching brought about by effective leadership and management and strong teamwork within and across year groups.

Pupils' books and their work in lessons show good progress in English, mathematics and science. Overall achievement is good, pupils very much enjoy learning and they are eager to do well. In mathematics, however, progress is sometimes limited by their lack of ability to recall number facts rapidly as they learn to solve increasingly complex mathematical problems. Attainment, which is above average, is high in English, showing the impact of initiatives to improve it. The work to improve the currently above average attainment in mathematics and science continues apace. The curriculum promotes literacy, especially writing skills really well in different subjects. However, while there are some good examples of mathematics skills being used, for example, in science and in design and technology, the potential to promote numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in different subjects, or for pupils to use ICT spontaneously during lessons, is relatively underdeveloped.

Pupils and their parents very much appreciate the excellent care, guidance and support the school provides for them, which contribute greatly to pupils' learning and personal development, as does the pupils' exemplary behaviour. Pupils' safety and welfare are high on the school's agenda. Safeguarding procedures, including those for child protection, are very robust and pupils are exceptionally well aware of how to keep themselves safe. Comments such as 'the school keeps me safe', 'they help me if I'm hurt', and 'I love school' are typical of the pupils' views, and all parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire, or spoke to inspectors, feel their children are always safe and secure in school. Pupils attend school regularly and on time, and

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by Year 6, they are ready to move on to their next school as mature, well-rounded individuals who are well prepared for their future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress in mathematics by:
 - improving pupils' ability to recall number facts quickly so that they can solve mathematical problems more effectively
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use, apply and consolidate their mathematical learning in different subjects.
- Give pupils more opportunities to use ICT to enhance and extend their learning across the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment is above average overall in Year 6 and high in English. It is also high in writing in Year 2. This represents at least good progress for all groups of pupils from their starting points on entry to the school. Pupils very much enjoy learning and want to do well. More able pupils in different year groups appreciate the benefits gained from, for example, the opportunities they have to work alongside older pupils to do harder work when they are capable of it. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities gain from the small group work often undertaken away from class that helps them to catch up and make good progress in English and mathematics.

Handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar are good, pupils have an extensive vocabulary and they use a good range of techniques to engage the reader. In Year 6, these include, for example, metaphors, similes and personification to create the picture of a volcano monster prior to writing their own versions of a myth. Pupils mark each other's work in the same way that teachers mark theirs, highlighting good points and suggesting ways to improve. They are perceptive in this and have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Pupils know their literacy targets well. They are mindful of them whenever they have to write and this contributes to their high standards. They are less secure about their mathematics targets because these are relatively new. Although progress in mathematics is good overall, pupils do not have rapid enough recall of number facts and this slows their progress when trying to solve increasingly complex mathematical problems. For example, Year 6 pupils were noted counting on their fingers to calculate how many threes there are in 24, instead of being able to state the answer as a known fact. The school is tackling this issue well with daily mental mathematics sessions and the use of a computer program designed to hone number skills. Pupils have competent ICT skills and they use computers to research information in different subjects. However, they do not use it as a natural tool for learning because they have too few opportunities to use computers outside of ICT lessons. Progress in science is good but pupils' books show their scientific knowledge and understanding are better than their investigative skills.

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Pupils have a good understanding of why it is important to eat healthily and take regular exercise. They throw themselves into the many opportunities the school provides for physical activity. They listen carefully to each other and to adults, show good levels of respect for everyone, and are readily accepting of each other’s differences. This includes welcoming pupils from different cultural backgrounds, and gaining a good understanding of cultural differences at home and abroad. Pupils contribute well to the school and wider community, for example, through the work of the school and eco councils, and by raising money for a range of charities. They enjoy school, achieve well and have excellent attitudes to learning, all of which contribute to their good progress.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Excellent relationships between staff and pupils contribute greatly to pupils’ progress and personal development. They underpin the high quality care, guidance and support extended to all pupils. Pupils’ health, safety and well-being are considered paramount to their learning, and their needs are met exceptionally well. Therefore, pupils are happy at school, secure in the knowledge that adults always listen to them, keep them safe and address any concerns they may have promptly and effectively. Effective links with other schools and external agencies contribute effectively to pupils’ progress and ease transition between different schools when pupils join the school and when they move on to secondary school. The school works hard to encourage good attendance but overall, attendance is average.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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Good planning, which is firmly based on the outcomes of teachers’ perceptive marking and accurate assessments of pupils’ learning, ensures a good pace in lessons with well-timed challenges that motivate pupils to do well. Teachers use their well-developed questioning skills effectively to check pupils’ understanding and they quickly pick up on and correct any misconceptions. The more creative approach to curricular planning, which brings different subjects together well, is helping pupils to see the links between learning and then applying skills as they acquire new knowledge and understanding. Literacy skills are promoted very effectively within this. More remains to be done in mathematics and ICT, however, including, for example, sharpening pupils’ mental mathematical skills and building into lessons more opportunities for pupils to use ICT to enhance their learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The clear commitment to improvement at all levels of leadership and management, including governance, manifests itself in a strong determination amongst all staff to accelerate progress for all pupils. Some initiatives, such as the creative curriculum and the steps to improve mathematics, are relatively new, but early indications are that they are successfully accelerating pupils’ learning and progress. All of this is the result of the headteacher’s clarity, vision and drive, and the strong teamwork they engender throughout the school. The school provides good value for money.

Governors support the headteacher well. They ensure that challenging targets keep staff and pupils on their toes, and recent training is improving governors’ ability to hold the school to account even better for its outcomes. Senior leaders regularly check teaching and learning, and the information informs the well-considered priorities in the school improvement plan. It is not always clear, however, how areas for development are followed up with individual teachers to improve classroom practice further.

The governing body uses its considerable expertise extremely well to keep all safeguarding matters, including child protection, health and safety, under constant review, and all relevant training is up to date. The effectiveness of this is evident in the pupils’ perceptive understanding of how to keep themselves safe, and their parents’ praise for the school in these matters. The school has a good understanding of its own context, and has formed effective links with other schools, which are successfully widening pupils’ knowledge and understanding of different cultures in

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the United Kingdom and abroad. It has received an International Schools Award for its work in this area and overall, it promotes community cohesion well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress. They start school with skills below those expected for their age, especially in communication, language, literacy and numeracy. Their progress is improving year on year because effective leadership and management have increased the focus on developing basic skills from the moment children start school. Children settle quickly. They benefit from parental presence at the beginning of each day, which builds their confidence and involves their parents effectively in their learning. Children play a dynamic role in deciding what they should learn. Topics therefore fire their enthusiasm and contribute to their good progress. They learn and play well on their own and with others, choosing activities freely and following instructions well. Staff constantly assess their progress, but they do not yet involve children enough in this, or in monitoring their access to tasks, to give them even greater responsibility for their learning. They are seeking ways to do so.

Good behaviour and excellent relations with adults develop in the children a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. Children confidently engage adults in conversation, explaining what they are learning and showing good levels of imagination, for example, as they describe their fairy houses, and talk to the giant hiding up the beanstalk. They involve themselves fully in all activities, indoors and out. However, while tasks involving the use of ICT are planned, spontaneous access to ICT as part of daily free choice is not well enough established. Nevertheless, the dedicated team of staff understand the children’s needs well, and have moved the unit forward considerably in recent years. Overall, children are well

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prepared for their work in Year 1.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire and those who spoke to inspectors during the inspection are very satisfied with the school. Virtually all said their children are safe in school, and several praised the school highly for its approach to safeguarding, saying, 'It is a strength of the school, they take it very seriously here', and they are right. A small minority of parents felt they could not approach staff about their children in the morning. Inspectors found that, for security, the school rightly locks the gates after allowing a reasonable time for pupils to arrive, and asks parents to call at the office after this should they need to speak to a member of staff. A small number of Year 6 parents voiced concerns about their children being taught by a different teacher part way through their final year. Inspectors found that, in order to cover a maternity leave, the school had made some well-considered decisions that ensured continuity of learning for all pupils in Years 5 and 6.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whittington Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 143 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 271 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	99	69	40	28	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	99	69	43	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	86	60	56	39	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	71	50	68	48	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	78	55	63	44	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	40	81	57	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	63	44	77	54	3	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	61	43	69	48	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	60	42	77	54	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	41	80	56	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	59	41	74	52	4	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	77	54	62	43	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	59	58	41	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whittington Primary School, Whittington, WS14 9LG

Thank you all very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We were particularly impressed by your excellent behaviour and by the confident way you spoke to us about your work. The staff care deeply for you and they very much want you to succeed. They work together to make this happen and the governors and headteacher keep a close eye on what they are doing. You told us you 'love school' and we could see that you work hard, try to do your best and care deeply for each other. You clearly enjoy learning and your enthusiasm is infectious and you are right when you say you go to a good school.

The governors and headteacher make very sure that the school is safe and secure for you. You are right when you say the school 'keeps us safe', and you have an excellent understanding of how to keep yourself safe. You also have a good understanding of the importance of following a healthy lifestyle. It was really good too, to see how much you help each other, including with your work, and that, especially in Year 6, you are able to assess and mark your own and each other's work and suggest how it might be improved. We noted that you are very good at writing and that you use your writing skills equally well no matter what subject you are studying. The exciting activities planned for you within the new curriculum give you plenty of opportunities to do this. However, the opportunities you have to use, apply and consolidate your mathematical and ICT skills in different subjects are not as well developed. We have therefore asked the school to:

- help you make faster progress in mathematics by improving your mental mathematics skills and giving you more opportunities to practise and use your mathematical skills in different subjects
- give you more opportunities to use ICT to enhance and extend your learning throughout the curriculum.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell
Lead inspector

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